

When God's Ways Don't Make Sense, Part 3 - Acts 12:11-17 - January 6th, 2008

- In Acts chapter 12, we've been looking at a mystery of sorts, one that presents us with a situation that in the logical makes no sense.
- Luke, by the Holy Spirit, records how in verse two James is martyred then nine verses later in verse 11 records how Peter is rescued.
- Why would God allow James to be martyred then a number of days later allow Peter to be rescued. God's ways just don't make sense!
- We've been looking at some clues that will hopefully solve this mystery and perhaps provide some insight into God's mysterious ways.

- 1. Wait for God's timing** (Verses 1-4) Peter waits in prison until after the Passover before God sends an angel to miraculously rescue him.
- 2. Pray to God earnestly** (Verse 5) While Peter is kept in prison, the church prayed earnestly for him, possibly that God would rescue him.
- 3. Rest in God's promise** (Verse 6) The night before Herod was to execute Peter, he's getting a good nights rest and is actually sleeping.
- 4. Know that God's present** (Verse 7a) An angel appears and a light shines in the prison cell. The Lord is present with Peter.
- 5. Believe in God's miracles** (Verse 7b) The angel hits Peter on the side to wake him, and the chains miraculously fell off his wrists.
- 6. Obey all God's instructions** (Verse 8) The angel gives Peter specific instructions and he obeys every single one of them.
- 7. Follow all God's directions** (Verses 9-10) Peter follows the angel out of prison even though he had no idea what was happening.

8. Trust in God's goodness (Verse 11)

11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating."

v11 Peter comes to his senses and says to himself, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent His angel and rescued me."

v11 Also tells us that Peter realized he'd been delivered from Herod's clutches and all that the Jews were anticipating.

Psalm 27:13-14 13 I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD. NIV

9. Return to God's people (Verse 12)

12 When this had dawned on him, **he went to the house** of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, **where many people had gathered and were praying.**

v12 After realizing what happened Peter goes to John Mark's mom's house where many of God's people were gathered and praying.

"Most theologians agree this was the home in which the Lord commemorated the Passover feast and which later became the unofficial meeting place of the early Christians. The descriptions supplied by Luke enable readers to visualize that spacious home. A small entrance door from the street opened into a courtyard, at the end of which stood the dwelling. It was large and spacious and capable of accommodating the many who had gathered to pray." Ivor Powell, "The Amazing Acts" p203

10. Recognize it's God's voice (Verses 13-15)

13 Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. 14 **When she recognized Peter's voice,** she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!" 15 "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

v13 Peter knocks on the outer entrance, and Rhoda comes to the door, but doesn't answer it, perhaps she's afraid it's Herod's men.

v14 Peter must have been asking to be let in, because it says that Rhoda "recognized Peter's voice," but she still doesn't let him in.

v14-15 Instead she runs back and tells them that Peter's at the door. They think she's out of her mind or that it must be Peter's angel.

John 10:4b ...and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. NIV

Revelation 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. NIV

11. Persist in God's leading (Verse 16-17)

16 **But Peter kept on knocking,** and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. 17 Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the brothers about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

v16 In spite of the door still not being opened, and believing that God had led him there for safety, Peter persists and keeps on knocking.

v16 Also tells us that they finally opened as Peter had kept on knocking, and when they see him, they are astonished.

v17 The excitement was such that Peter had to motion them to be quiet as he told them what God had done, then left for another place.

Matthew 7:7-8 7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. NIV

- You may be saying at this point; "Pastor, I appreciate your 11 points in these 17 verses but it still just doesn't make sense."

- It doesn't seem fair that James dies, and Peter lives, especially when Peter, James and John were the three that were closest to Jesus.

- Allow me to quote to you from a novel I'm currently reading about a father whose daughter was abducted and murdered.

"Mackenzie," it was the voice of Papa again, especially gentle and tender. "You really don't understand yet. You try to make sense of the world in which you live based on a very small and incomplete picture of reality. It is like looking at a parade through the tiny knothole of hurt, pain, self-centeredness, and power, and believing you are on your own and insignificant. All of these contain powerful lies. You see pain and death as ultimate evils and God as the ultimate betrayer, or perhaps, at best, as fundamentally untrustworthy. You dictate the terms and judge my actions and find me guilty. "The real underlying flaw in your life, Mackenzie, is that you don't think that I am good. If you knew I was good and that everything – the means, the ends, and all the processes of individual lives – is all covered by my goodness, then while you might not always understand what I am doing, you would trust me. But you don't. ...Mackenzie, Papa rose out of [the] chair and walked around the table to give him a big squeeze. 'We're not justifying it. We are redeeming it.'"

William P Young "The Shack" pp 126-127

So why would God allow James to die, while at the same time allowing Peter to live?

- Was it because Peter was more righteous than James? No, c'mon, this is Peter we're talking about! Enough said!
- Was it because Peter was more fortunate than James? No, I'm quite certain that James didn't feel that way in the Lord's presence.
- Was it because Peter had more faith than James? No, Peter was in a deep sleep when he was rescued.
- Was it because Peter had more work to do than James? Yes, I believe James' work was finished, and it was his time so God took him.